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Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997–2006)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is a response to General Assembly resolution 52/193 of 18 December 1997 on the "First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty". The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on progress made in the implementation of measures, themes, recommendations and activities related to the Decade, including recommendations for possible actions and initiatives for the rest of the Decade, as well as proposals for better coordination of actions taken by the United Nations system.

The report highlights the progress and setbacks experienced in poverty eradication and underscores the link between poverty, human rights and development. It also stresses the importance of global targets and international cooperation, as well as their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Furthermore, the report reviews the activities of the United Nations system in support of national efforts.

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I. Introduction

1. Eradicating poverty is the primary challenge facing the international community at the eve of the twenty-first century. In its resolution 52/193 of 18 December 1997, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on progress made in the implementation of measures, themes, recommendations and activities related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including recommendations for possible actions and initiatives for the rest of the Decade, as well as proposals for better coordination of actions taken by the United Nations system.

2. The present report has been prepared in response to those requests. Section II consists of an overview of progress and setbacks in poverty eradication; section III covers the theme of the year "Poverty, human rights and development"; section IV covers global targets and international cooperation and their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty; section V covers the activities of the United Nations system related to the Decade. The present report should be read in conjunction with the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/53/211) and on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty (A/53/223).

II. An overview of progress and setbacks in poverty eradication

3. Significant political, economic and social changes have overtaken the world in the 1990s and there has been renewed commitment to the eradication of poverty. Eliminating poverty was a cross-cutting theme of major conferences and summits and is a major challenge for the twenty-first century. Policies aiming at a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, more widely shared possibilities for influencing decisions, as well as increasing opportunities for the poor, are of utmost importance for the eradication of poverty.

4. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[1] has reaffirmed that the most productive economic and social policies are those that enable people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. Social and economic development cannot be secured in a sustainable way without the full participation of women. Equality between women and men is a priority for the international community and must be at the centre of economic and social development.

5. Global living standards have risen dramatically over the past 25 years. Despite an increase in population from 2.9 billion people in 1970 to 5.8 billion in 1996, per capita income growth in developing countries has averaged 1.3 per cent a year, according to the World Bank's 1998 *World Development Indicators*. While hundreds of millions have had lifted from them the yoke of poverty and despair, millions more have been added to those living in abject poverty.

6. The global progress in poverty reduction conceals large regional differences. Until the financial crisis in East Asia, the proportion of people living in poverty was declining in Asia, where most of the poor live. More than 500 million people remain in poverty in South Asia. The number of poor is rising rapidly in Europe and Central Asia and continuing to rise in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

Education

7. The challenges of the coming century to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development and lasting peace will fall on today's young people. Educating the young to meet these challenges has become a priority for every society. Investment in education, therefore, is fundamental for the process of enabling individuals and countries to realize their potential and make the most of their resources.

8. Education is often singled out as an important policy instrument in bringing about greater equality of opportunity. The most important asset of people living in poverty is their labour time. Opportunities for the productive utilization of this asset through employment are enhanced through education. Education raises the productivity of both employed workers and the self-employed. Hence, it can reduce inequalities by strengthening the opportunities for the poor to increase their income.

9. In many countries there is a growing realization that education is the key to the future and that the challenges and jobs of tomorrow will require an education of better quality than that which most students receive today. Perceptions of the scope of education also are changing as societies realize the importance of life-long learning, that education does not end with childhood and youth. In this context, the two main strands of global educational policies are the deepening commitment of most countries to the democratization of education (Education for All and Education Throughout Life) and the tendency towards a more productive view of educational quality and purposes. Some of the signs of how the productive view has permeated educational policies, compared to 30 years ago, are through assessment,

adjustment, effectiveness, performance, outcomes, fiscal constraints and of course human capital.

10. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *World Education Report 1998: Teachers and Teaching in a Changing World*, the global patterns of student enrolments by region and level of education have changed considerably over the last 30 years and continue to evolve. In the developing regions, where population pressures are still strong and student enrolment growth rates generally have been positive, Education for All, including an improvement in the quality of basic education, has been the main focus of educational policies, at least to the extent that political and economic conditions have allowed. In sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arab States and southern Asia region, which include most of the least developed countries, educational policies have been very much hostage to economic and political circumstances.

11. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where the educational infrastructure is more highly developed than in other developing regions, the 1990s have witnessed several major initiatives towards the decentralization of once-monolithic State education system, e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. In each case, this has entailed, among other things, complex and protracted discussions with teachers' unions, which traditionally had negotiated teachers' salaries and conditions of service at the national level and were still wary of further erosion of their incomes coming after the experiences of inflation and structural adjustment policies in the 1980s.

12. In spite of the progress in student enrolments in the developing world, an estimated 140 million school-age children, 60 per cent of them girls, do not go to school. Over 900 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, are illiterate.

Health

13. According to the *World Health Report 1998*, at least 120 countries (total population above 5 billion) currently have a life expectancy at birth of more than 60 years. The global average is 66 years compared to only 48 years in 1955; it is projected to reach 75 years in 2025. Based on the review by the World Health Organization (WHO) of overall health trends in the past 50 years, remarkable improvements in health have been due to socio-economic development, the wider provision of safe water, sanitation facilities and personal hygiene, and the establishment and expansion of national services.

14. Tragically, while average life expectancy has been increasing throughout the twentieth century, 3 out of 4 people in the least developed countries today die before the age of 50 – the global life expectancy figure of half a century ago. This year, 21 million deaths – 2 out of every 5 worldwide – will be among the under-50s, including 10 million small children who will never see their fifth birthday, although most children worldwide are now immunized against major childhood killers. Over 7 million deaths will be men and women in what should be some of the best and most productive years of their lives.

Safe water and sanitation

15. Water resources are essential for satisfying basic human needs, health and food production, energy, the restoration and maintenance of ecosystems, and for social and economic development in general. Agriculture accounts for a major part of global freshwater use.[2]

16. The lack of basic sanitation, water supply and food safety continues to contribute greatly to diarrhoeal disease mortality and morbidity in the developing world. In spite of efforts made during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, about 20 per cent of the world population lacks access to safe water and about 50 per cent lacks access to adequate forms of sanitation. Current trends in the provision of services remain insufficient to achieve full service coverage in the near future. For sanitation, in particular, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council meeting held in November 1997 in Manila concluded that at the present rates of progress, the world cannot achieve full service coverage by the year 2100. The problem of water supply and sanitation is particularly acute in dense urban areas, where construction has overtaken the rate at which the supply system and sanitation services can be installed economically and within the financial capacity of municipalities.

17. Rural communities are generally well dispersed within a watershed and have intimate links with small-scale catchments and aquifers, although there is evidence that those localized sources are becoming increasingly polluted from latrines and waste heaps. In many developing countries there is still a strong urban bias in access to potable water, adequate sanitation and health clinics.

18. It is important that considerations of equitable and responsible use of water become an integral part of formulating strategic approaches to integrated water management at all levels, in particular in addressing the problem of people living in poverty. The development, management, protection and use of water so as to contribute

to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of food security is an exceptionally important goal.

Impact of the international economic environment on poverty

19. Experiences of East Asian countries show the powerful synergy between economic growth and social sector investment, as well as the need to achieve balance between growth objectives and social development with respect to resource allocation. East Asia had achieved remarkable development progress from the 1960s to the mid-1990s. Absolute poverty, on the average, had been reduced from afflicting 60 per cent of the population in the sub-region to only 20 per cent (before the current economic crisis). The success in alleviating poverty had been largely due to the considerable attention paid to human resources development, in particular, education, by the Governments of East Asian countries.

20. According to the *World Economic and Social Survey, 1998* (E/1998/50), economic growth in developing countries is expected to decline in 1998, due primarily to direct and indirect consequences of the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis. Contractionary adjustment policies, poor business confidence, shortage of domestic liquidity and scarcity of external finance underlie the economic contraction in the crisis countries in Asia. Reduced foreign direct investment flows from the affected Asian economies is expected to have a negative effect. Weaker international commodity prices, aggravated by significantly reduced demand from Asia and elsewhere, are anticipated to weaken economic growth in commodity exporting developing countries.

21. The recent East Asian financial crisis has slowed the pace of poverty reduction in the region. Although precise estimates are not available, tens of millions of people have been dragged back to poverty. For example, as many as 50 million Indonesians face a return to poverty as a result of the drought and financial crisis, according to a recent assessment of the World Bank. Consequently, rice and overall food prices rose by 50 per cent over a 12-month span, according to an April 1998 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). As a result, Indonesia will have to import about 3.5 million tons of rice in 1998. Farmers, who represent more than half the workforce, are suffering severely. Furthermore, unemployment continues to rise in East Asia (up from 2 per cent to about 6.9 per cent in the Republic of Korea). Social strife is likely to intensify under pressure from growing poverty, with effects that could include a disruption of the economic distribution system, due to conflict in some urban areas. Women are expected to experience a particularly heavy burden, with a significant increase in domestic violence and divorce as a result of joblessness and family dislocation.

22. Although most East Asian countries invested in education and health, social safety nets were not yet established to protect the unemployed. But under the current circumstances, many families are financially overburdened since the traditional breadwinners have been laid off. The majority of the "newly poor" are unskilled workers, who were temporarily employed during the economic boom but have now lost their livelihoods. Specific programmes to provide credit to those sectors most adversely affected, including agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises and exporters, are of utmost importance in alleviating social distress and poverty in the region.

23. There is an urgent need for policies that will both inhibit the flow of volatile short-term capital and encourage long-term capital, especially foreign direct investment. Burden sharing by making borrowers and lenders pay the full costs of their risks, will strengthen the financial sector and will minimize the adverse effects.

24. Direct employment creation schemes, which include labour-intensive public works schemes and credit schemes to promote self-employment and enterprise development, will contribute to containing the social costs. Such schemes have been used in the past as part of poverty alleviation programmes, mainly in rural areas. Furthermore, the strengthening of social protection in the region is also an important long-term need.

25. Despite significant economic growth in some African countries, poverty remains pervasive, urban unemployment is high, underemployment is common and many subsist in low productivity, informal sector jobs in all countries. Africa and the least developed countries (LDCs) remain highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, such as those related to weather or volatile international commodity prices.

26. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) *Least Developed Countries: 1997 Report*, development has proved elusive for a significant number of LDCs during the last 10 years. These countries have experienced a setback in development: their economies have declined, social conditions have worsened markedly, and they have become increasingly marginalized from the mainstream of the world economy. There are important differences between individual LDCs in terms of the nature of setbacks, its scale and its causes.

27. Poverty in LDCs is manifested in the deterioration of a range of economic and social indicators, including per capita output, food availability, access to education, health status and war-related mortality and displacement. Lack of adequate physical infrastructure and human resources development, declining commodity prices, adverse terms of trade and natural and man-made disasters contribute to negative economic growth for most LDCs. Many LDCs have become marginalized from the mainstream of the world economy, particularly from international trade and investment flows. Even inflows of international aid have fallen dramatically for some LDCs, because of the collapse of State structures through which aid can be disbursed and utilized. Poverty in the case of LDCs is best understood as a process in which the deterioration of State capacities, the weakening of civil society and economic decline interact to reinforce one another.

28. Equitable income growth is essential for reducing chronic food deficiency and poverty. As the majority of the poor are rural farmers, policies that promote agricultural and rural development will also enhance food security by raising incomes and reducing poverty. However, the most effective policy for increasing food security in certain LDCs is the promotion of peace.

29. Of particular concern to LDCs is the decline of official development assistance (ODA) and the prices of primary commodities on which they rely heavily. Furthermore, LDC's external debt burden continues to be a constraint on their capacity to accelerate development: it limits and dampens prospects for larger private capital inflows.

III. Poverty, human rights and development

30. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development reaffirmed the promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and seeks to ensure that they are respected, protected and observed. The special theme for 1998, "Poverty, human rights and development" was selected in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides the occasion for taking stock and looking at the deficits that still exist.

31. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the rights to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control", the violation of which generates poverty. Poverty and inequality are therefore violations of those human rights and others such as the right to participate, an effective legal system, freedom of expression and the principle of non-discrimination.

32. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, affirmed that extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development, in order to promote the human rights of the poorest.[3] To this end, it is essential for States to support participation by the poorest in the decision-making process of the community in which they live.

33. A human rights-based approach to poverty defines beneficiaries and the nature of their needs. It also recognizes beneficiaries as active subjects and claim holders and establishes duties or obligations for those against whom a claim can be brought to ensure that needs are met. The concept of claim holders and duty-bearers introduces an element of accountability. Increased accountability is pivotal to improved effectiveness and transparency.

34. Extreme poverty involves denial of a wide range of basic human rights and prevents full exercise of many others. Freedom and respect for economic, social and cultural rights go hand-in-hand. Poverty also prevents people from assuming not only their duties as individuals, but also their collective duties as citizen, parent, worker and elector.

35. The Vienna Declaration also reaffirmed the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. The Declaration on the Right to Development[4] brings together the two covenants, through its elaboration of a holistic vision integrating civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, aiming at a constant improvement of the well-being of the human person. The individual's active, free and meaningful participation in development is the basis for the implementation of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development.

36. With the globalization of the world economy, concerns are increasingly expressed about the negative impact on human rights of the world expansion of market rules and the social dimensions of the liberalization of trade. While the globalization of the world economy provides new opportunities for all countries, it also increases the risk of

marginalization of countries, groups and individuals that are not able to compete, and hence creates or aggravates poverty.

37. Issues at stake comprise the growing concentration of power in the hands of transnational economic and financial institutions, the liberalization of economic polices reducing the States' ability to manage growth and development, the privatization of social policy resulting in disentitlement for an increasingly larger number of people, deregulation at both the national and international levels, competitiveness, the complex challenges involved in interdependence and the risk of instability.

38. In its resolution 1998/25, adopted on 17 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided on the appointment of an independent expert to address the question of human rights and extreme poverty. The independent expert will: (a) evaluate the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and extreme poverty, including through the assessment of measures taken at the national and international levels, taking into account in particular obstacles encountered and progress made by women living in extreme poverty; (b) make recommendations in the sphere of technical assistance and report on these activities to the Commission on Human Rights at it fifty-fifth (1999) and fifty-sixth (2000) sessions, making those reports available to the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women; (c) contribute to the General Assembly's special session in the year 2000 on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development; and (d) make suggestions to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session on the main points of a possible draft declaration on human rights and extreme poverty, for consideration by the Subcommission in 1999 and submission to the Commission, and for possible adoption by the General Assembly.

39. The basic link between democracy, development and human rights requires that all human rights be viewed as universal, indivisible and interdependent. The right to food, adequate housing, health, education, access to gainful employment, respect for international labour standards (including freedom of association and collective bargaining in the area of labour, freedom from discrimination in labour, elimination of forced labour and child labour) are all linked to poverty eradication.

IV. Global targets and international cooperation and their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

40. Poverty eradication has remained a major concern in the work of the United Nations since the establishment of the Organization. The mandate of United Nations work against poverty is embedded in international agreements, declarations and covenants, dating back to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action provides the substantive framework for the current drive for eradicating poverty and for planning the efforts of the United Nations system in support of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

41. Recognizing the multidimensional characteristics of poverty, the international community has set for itself a range of interlocking development goals which, taken together, address the overarching challenge of poverty eradication. These goals include: achieving a substantial reduction of overall poverty and the eradication of extreme poverty by a date set by each country; reductions in infant and child mortality; reductions in maternal mortality and child malnutrition; improvements in life expectancy; and access to basic social services, especially among women. These goals provide a powerful set of objectives for all development partners to marshal resources and eradicate poverty.

42. A growing number of countries have formulated national strategies and action plans to fight poverty, in response to the World Summit for Social Development commitment to reduce overall poverty and eradicate absolute poverty through decisive national and international actions.

43. The United Nations reforms, announced in 1997 by the Secretary-General, provide a framework for collaborative action by the different organs and bodies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, which can support and encourage country-by-country efforts geared towards the goals of accelerating poverty reduction and the eradication of the worst aspects of poverty during the next two decades. The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, adopted a Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty, in May 1998. They stressed that the current global environment provides a real chance to qualitatively improve the conditions of life for the vast majority of the people who live in poverty, and

affirmed their collective commitment to the goal of eradicating poverty.

44. This collective commitment to eradicate poverty is not limited to governmental and intergovernmental institutions. Civil society all over the world is also determined to combat poverty and its root causes. A wide array of national and international organizations, including many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have put the fight against poverty at the centre of their own strategies and partnerships.

A. Equity, poverty reduction and international cooperation

45. There is a continued perception that globalization is a powerful force leading to new opportunities and challenges. For a large number of countries as well as people, it has brought definite benefits, but for others, it has brought further marginalization. Many argue that the inequity inherent in the current prevailing model of development has been the main cause of social, economic and cultural degradation experienced in many societies, and that it is the cause of the increasing vulnerability of many social groups.

46. Equity, in a broader sense, encompasses equality of opportunity and access, as well as the distribution of income, consumption and wealth. Improvements in health, education, nutrition, and the equity of land ownership can enable individuals to participate more fully and more productively in the economy.

47. Equitable access to the economic and social benefits of development in both developed and developing countries are key elements for eradicating poverty. International cooperation is key to ensuring that the benefits of globalization are shared equitably.

48. Promoting economic and financial stability depends crucially on political stability, but the same is true in reverse. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to such instability, and it is important that there be a well-managed set of international mechanisms to support beneficial regulation and stability. The East Asian crisis has had devastating effects on the poor and vulnerable groups. The most seriously affected groups are the less educated, the unskilled, the migrant workers, women, and those who depended on government social programmes. The international community has an essential role in contributing to the financial stability of East Asian countries. Equitable burden-sharing and reduced social costs are therefore of the utmost importance.

49. External debt burden continues to be a constraint to many developing countries, especially in Africa and the least developed countries. Debt servicing payments contribute to poverty when public revenue is diverted from productive sector expenditure, such as education, health and physical infrastructure to debt servicing. The most important recent development in debt relief for LDCs is the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative. This initiative provides a framework for implementing a strategy of burden-sharing among all creditors to reduce HIPC debt to a sustainable level.

50. Linking global goals and targets to the issues of financing and assistance in achieving the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and other conferences is of particular importance. Poor countries will need major external financing to alleviate poverty. Globally, ODA has fallen to just 0.25 per cent of gross domestic product in 1996 – the lowest level since foreign aid was institutionalized with the Marshall Plan about 50 years ago. So far, only Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target. It is noteworthy, though, that the United Kingdom and Ireland have begun increasing aid as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). With declining ODA and the breakdown in some countries of national economies and social welfare systems, resource availability becomes more crucial for promoting development. The 20/20 Initiative mentioned at the Summit provides one innovative way of increasing resources for basic social services from ODA and national budgets of interested countries. It is imperative for the international community to find new and innovative ways of mobilizing resources for social and economic development.

51. The most important challenge facing the international community is to enable the poorest developing countries, especially those in Africa and the least developed countries, to develop capacities, integrate better into the global economy and thereby benefit from the opportunities offered by globalization. Debt relief, additional and well-targeted resources, access to markets, information and technology, as well as better trade opportunities are all crucial to poverty reduction and eradication.

B. Partnership for integrated anti-poverty efforts

52. Partnership may be established at different levels: local, national, regional, or international. In its resolution 1996/7, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the need to ensure an effective partnership and cooperation between Governments and the relevant actors of civil society, the social partners and the major groups as defined in Agenda 21, including NGOs and the private sector, in the implementation of and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

53. It is of utmost importance to encourage the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate partnership for poverty eradication and development both at the national and international levels among Governments, the private sector and organizations of civil society. The idea of partnership is to unite efforts for social cohesion rather than shifting burdens.

54. The World Summit for Social Development recognized that poverty eradication requires the promotion of sustained economic growth, in the context of sustainable development, and social progress, requiring that growth be broadly based, offering equal opportunities to all people. Good governance, macroeconomic balances, opening spaces for individual, local and business initiatives and effective human development programmes are all key elements of a national poverty eradication strategy.

55. A proper balance between the State and the market is crucial for social progress and development. The State has a key role to play in supporting economic arrangements which encourage human development, stimulate enterprise and saving and create the environment necessary to mobilize domestic resources and to attract foreign investment. Sustainable development to eradicate poverty rests on economic growth that is not only stable and vigorous, but which also embraces people living in poverty and allows them to share the fruits of development. A dynamic private sector requires a government that fosters economic growth and is more responsive to the needs of people living in poverty. In order to benefit and promote the participation of people living in poverty, economic growth must incorporate a sound and open macroeconomic framework, in which resources are used productively and which facilitates the development of income- and employment-generating activities that include poor people, particularly women.

56. A strong and fruitful partnership between developed and developing countries is essential for the eradication of poverty. A vital step towards this end, is the economic well-being and poverty reduction proposal of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Development Partnerships Strategy – with the specific goal that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries should be reduced by at least one half by 2015. Progress reports for the DAC high-level meeting in Paris (8 and 9 April 1998) show that the hardest work for donors now will be in helping make it possible for developing-country partners to take full ownership and leadership of their development efforts, backed by better coordinated aid and other international support. OECD members are challenged to assure pro-development impacts from policies in areas such as aid-procurement liberalization, sustainable development and the mobilization of financing from all sources for development.

57. Development of indicators is also essential to monitor and assess progress achieved in eradicating poverty. Work by DAC, with experts from United Nations agencies, the World Bank and developing countries, has yielded substantial results in preparing for international consideration a manageable, working set of indicators of development progress, covering the goal of reducing extreme poverty and many of the main global goals agreed upon by the international community. At the same time, the United Nations system is promoting the synergies of this approach with its own Development Assistance Framework and the Minimum National Social Data Set.

58. With a political will, partnership and solidarity, poverty eradication is a reachable goal given the tremendous resources and wealth in the world.

C. Coordination at the intergovernmental level

1. Commission for Social Development

59. The Commission for Social Development considered "Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods" and "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons", respectively, at its thirty-fifth[5] and thirty-sixth sessions.[6] Expansion of productive employment is an essential means to eradicate poverty, which is one of the major causes of social exclusion. Furthermore, social integration is best promoted in close harmony with efforts to expand productive employment and eradicate poverty, given their mutually reinforcing interrelationships. In this context, the Commission's agreed conclusions stressed

actions and policies that could contribute to the expansion of productive employment, as well as the promotion of social integration at the national and international levels.

60. The Commission will be discussing in February 1999 the important issue, social services for all, and the impact of globalization on national revenue and the capacity to pay for social services. Its conclusions could be of paramount importance to the objective of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

2. Economic and Social Council

61. The Economic and Social Council, at its 1998 session on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, stressed that poverty eradication and improving living conditions of people everywhere should be the overriding objective of the Council's efforts to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences, in particular the World Summit for Social Development. The coordination and management role of the Council, particularly with regard to its functional commissions and the executive boards of the funds and programmes; inter-agency coordination, national and regional level follow-up; and the vital importance of developing a coherent set of basic indicators to assess progress in social and economic development were the focus of the Council's coordination segment. The Council decided on the theme "Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development" for its 1999 coordination segment. The Council also decided that the role of employment and work in poverty eradication would be the theme of the high-level segment of its 1999 substantive session.

62. At the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session of 1998, it was noted that trade liberalization and market access should be seen in the context of poverty eradication, the ultimate goal of development efforts. In this context, ensuring the provision of basic services, creating adequate infrastructure and investing in human development were all necessary prerequisites of a developing country's benefiting from any enhancement of global market access for its goods. It was noted that numerous tariff – and non-tariff – barriers remained, as well as tariff peaks and escalation, which affected developing countries' exports. It is, therefore, essential that the future multilateral trade agenda should aim at broad-based liberalization of trade.

3. General Assembly

63. By resolution 50/161, the General Assembly decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, and to consider further initiatives to achieve the commitments adopted at Copenhagen. At its organizational session held in May 1998, the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session held two panel discussions on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. Among the issues addressed were the need to promote better integration of all aspects of development in the analysis and formulation of policies of poverty eradication, and the need to target the poorest of the poor and the "floating" populations such as the homeless, squatters, the rural indigent, urban slum dwellers and persons with disabilities. With regard to further initiatives to be considered by the special session, topics related to poverty reduction and eradication will inevitably be included, such as equity and distributional issues, which will be addressed in the *Report of the World Social Situation 2000*.

V. Activities of the United Nations system in support of national efforts

A. Administrative Committee on Coordination

64. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has called upon organizations of the United Nations system to maintain sustained support to countries in translating the commitments made at conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development, into concrete national policies and programmes. In October 1997, ACC reaffirmed that the eradication of poverty remained a fundamental goal of the United Nations system that required its sustained and coordinated effort. At its first regular session of 1998, ACC also provided guidance for the inter-agency work to identify key areas, with a view to promoting collaboration and synergies among them at the country level. ACC stresses accelerating and sustaining economic growth that is equitable, employment-intensive and pro-poor. But action against poverty needs to go beyond economic factors. It requires special measures to increase the access of the poor to productive assets, including credit and land, and to make them also productive in the social and civil spheres.

65. ACC also stresses that empowerment, participation and strengthening of social capital are important means for

action against poverty, as well as ends in themselves. Strengthening and mobilizing social capital calls for policy and institutional changes that support empowerment of the poor and the full realization of their rights as citizens. It demands changes that promote the political, social and economic advancement of women, and of disadvantaged or marginalized groups. Special programmes may be required to address the needs of excluded groups, such as indigenous peoples, those living in remote areas and refugees. ACC also calls upon all countries to take these considerations and needs fully into account in their national development strategies, and expresses its determination to extend full support to such strategies, with a view to achieving development and peace by addressing the root causes of poverty.

66. The United Nations system assists countries, where requested, in the formulation of national plans and programmes for the eradication of poverty in line with government priorities and with the commitment to an integrated and coordinated follow-up to recent conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development. The resident coordinator system has been active in promoting a broad policy dialogue with Governments through a number of mechanisms linked with the programming of operational activities for development, notably inter-agency thematic groups.

B. United Nations Secretariat

67. Several departments of the United Nations support the work of the intergovernmental bodies in the area of poverty eradication, through the collection and dissemination of information, analytical and normative work, panel discussions and expert group meetings, and by encouraging the contribution of civil society. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs was designated by the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/183, as the preparatory body for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996). The Department, in particular the Division for Social Policy and Development, acted as the focal point for the Year within the system, as well as for the preparations for the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, proclaimed by the Assembly in its resolution 50/107. A report entitled "Observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) and recommendations for the rest of the Decade" (A/52/573) was submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

C. Regional commissions

68. The regional commissions have a mandate from the General Assembly to follow up on conference goals. They provide, *inter alia*, advisory services and regional technical cooperation activities to assist Governments in developing a range of policies and programmes for poverty alleviation in various development sectors.

69. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been involved for the last three years in initiating a process to examine the requirements of a broad-based development strategy that reduces poverty in the continent, and in implementing the elements of such a strategy. In this regard, ECA prepared a thematic programme with an elaborate agenda on the eradication of poverty in Africa, as a long-term objective of development. The elements of the programme, as they relate to the policy analysis dimension, include (a) capacity-building in the analysis of poverty, where several training modules on poverty and public policy were adapted to suit African conditions in collaboration with the World Bank; (b) activities related to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa; (c) organizing a regional follow-up conference to the World Summit for Social Development; and (d) research and publications related to poverty.

70. ECA organized two training workshops on poverty and public policy, which were held respectively in Addis Ababa in June 1997 and in Johannesburg, South Africa, in February 1998, and were attended by more than 90 participants from 26 African countries. Participants were drawn from central and local governments, NGOs, academic and research institutions and the media.

71. Under the auspices of the United Nations System-wide Initiative, ECA, in collaboration with the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized a high-level policy forum on "Cost-sharing in the social sectors" in June 1997, in Addis Ababa. The objective of the forum was to take stock of recent country experiences with cost-sharing in health care and education. The outcome of the forum provides, among others, one of the main background documents to be presented at the upcoming regional follow-up conference to the World Summit for Social Development. The proposed date for the regional follow-up to the Summit is early December 1998. It will be hosted by the Government of Kenya, and is designed to exploit maximum collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization of African Unity

(OAU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank.

72. Moreover, ECA's work programme features a number of recurrent and non-recurrent publications dealing with issues of poverty. For example, in collaboration with UNICEF and OAU, a report on African children will be produced, starting in 1999. A status report on poverty in Africa is also planned in collaboration with the World Bank at a future date. Non-recurrent publications are planned to deal with issues relating to the "gender dimension of poverty" and the "ethnic dimension of poverty". Furthermore, future activities of ECA include a planned ad hoc expert group meeting on "Integrating quantitative and qualitative poverty data for policy analysis" to be held in October 1999 and a planned regional conference on "Anti-poverty policies and programmes in Africa" to be held in December 1999 in Addis Ababa. Collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Statistics Division of the Secretariat, the World Bank and other regional commissions is envisaged.

73. An important activity of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) related to poverty elimination is the Programme for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in countries in transition. SMEs play a significant role in creating employment and can be regarded as a major vehicle for combating unemployment and poverty. Within the framework of this programme, ECE's activities include providing technical assistance in the development of national SMEs, development of legislation to promote entrepreneurship, providing statistical data, preparing discussion papers and information material, as well as organizing workshops on SMEs.

74. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development organized by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at Manila in November 1997 reviewed progress made towards poverty alleviation in the ESCAP region. The Ministerial Conference, *inter alia*, identified priority issues and related actions for strengthening national capacities for formulating and implementing effective policies and programmes for poverty alleviation in Asian and Pacific countries. ESCAP provides assistance in the formulation of policies and programmes to strengthen the role of the informal sector. A recent regional seminar examined the problems and constraints faced by the informal sector and made recommendations on policies and programmes for enhancing the productivity and income of informal sector workers.

75. The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 1998* stressed the fundamental objective of long-term development, namely, growth and equity, despite the current East Asia crisis. To that end, the *Survey* examines trends in the distribution of income and the incidence of poverty and offers a number of suggestions including enhancing agricultural productivity, human resources development, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, education for women and child health care. ESCAP will also organize a regional workshop on poverty statistics in 1999, involving users and producers, in order to make further progress in developing standard approaches and methodologies for measuring poverty and for improving the availability of data.

76. ECLAC organized the first Regional Conference on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from 6 to 9 April 1997. The ECLAC secretariat prepared a background document entitled "The Equity Gap: Latin America, the Caribbean and the Social Summit" (E/LC/G.1954 (CONF.86/3)), which analyses existing conditions of poverty, employment and social integration; reports on the developments that have proven most relevant to the aforementioned commitments; and proposes a few additional guidelines on the content and scope of policies designed to facilitate the full realization of those commitments.

77. ECLAC organized jointly with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Chilean Ministry of Planning and Cooperation (MIDEPLAN) a workshop on "Social Institutional Framework for Overcoming Poverty and for Achieving Equity", in Santiago on 16 and 17 May 1997. ECLAC also continued with the publication of the *Social Panorama of Latin America* (1996 and 1997 editions), an annual assessment of the most relevant aspects of social evolution in the region, with particular emphasis on poverty, employment and income distribution.

78. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) commenced its work on poverty alleviation in 1995 and has progressed in three distinct but related phases: (a) measurement, characteristics and determinants of poverty; (b) policies to eradicate poverty; and (c) tools to eradicate poverty.

79. During the first phase, ESCWA undertook a number of technical studies on the concept, measurement and determinants of poverty in Western Asia. The research focused on an approach that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that results from complex inter-linked determinants including social, economic and political conditions and the disabling environment. On a country level, ESCWA undertook poverty profiles for several countries and areas in the region including Iraq, the West

Bank and the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. After the completion of the country profiles and sectoral studies, emphasis shifted to the second phase, that is, the evaluation of policy measures adopted by ESCWA member States to combat poverty.

80. A meeting on improving standards of living in the Arab Mashreq countries was convened in Cairo during November 1997, to lay the ground for ESCWA's future work in formulating policies and strategies to eradicate poverty in the ESCWA region. During the current biennium, work is concentrating on policies required to alleviate poverty. The issues of poverty and youth and the role of income generating activities in eradicating poverty and improving the standards of living in local communities will also be investigated. The third phase (2000–2001 biennium) will be devoted to proposals of operational policies aimed at eradicating poverty in the region. Work will concentrate on three major tools for poverty eradication, namely social funds, micro-credit lending, and community development.

D. United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies

81. Poverty eradication has become a major cooperation focus of the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, both at policy and operational levels. The combined effort, based on agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development, is to assist Governments, particularly in developing countries, to develop policies and programmes to implement the conference outcomes, involving both the creation of an enabling environment and the provision of technical assistance.

United Nations Children's Fund

82. In developing countries, children are disproportionately represented among the poor. Globally, UNICEF estimates that children account for at least half of the poor, which implies that more than 700 million children in the developing countries live currently in conditions of extreme poverty (on less than $1 a day). Moreover, their number has been rising by some 4 per cent per annum in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. It is estimated that, at present, a staggering 40 per cent of the children in low- and middle-income countries live in poverty. UNICEF acts to overcome the worst manifestations of poverty through its support to national Governments for providing all children with access to basic social services and ensuring that their rights are met. UNICEF's programmes of cooperation are guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child[7] and the specific goals and targets agreed to at the World Summit for Children. Within those frameworks, UNICEF undertakes actions in support of basic education, primary health care, nutrition, and low-cost water and sanitation. Actions are also targeted to reduce maternal mortality, child labour and sexual exploitation, which are all either a manifestation of or contribute to absolute poverty in developing countries.

83. Government expenditure on basic social services is a major instrument for the reduction of poverty. UNICEF promotes the 20/20 Initiative as a mechanism for mobilizing additional resources for children. Studies are being undertaken in several countries to determine the scope and extent to which budget and aid restructuring and efficiency gains can contribute to achieving universal access to basic social services in the shortest possible time span. UNICEF is working with UNDP, the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to bring to the forefront the results of these studies and mobilize actions to meet the objectives of the 20/20 Initiative, and is working with co-sponsors (the Netherlands and Viet Nam) in preparing an international meeting in Hanoi in October 1998 on the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative.

United Nations Development Programme

84. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, UNDP launched a multi-donor programme to assist programme countries in the formulation of national strategies and action plans to fight poverty. With funding of approximately $20 million, this initiative is providing catalytic support to country anti-poverty efforts by: (a) raising public awareness of the extent, distribution and causes of poverty, and creating political space for a debate on national development priorities; (b) strengthening the capacity of government agencies and civil society to gather, analyse and monitor social indicators and to review public policies, budgets and programmes that impact on people's well-being; (c) defining national goals and targets for the reduction of overall poverty and the elimination of extreme poverty; (d) improving coordination among agencies dealing with social and economic policy; and (e) building a consensus among public, private and civil society actors on the most effective means to tackle poverty in their country. The Initiative was formally launched in late May 1996 and is now being offered in nearly 100 countries. UNDP is also supporting the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative in collaboration with other agencies in more than 20 countries.

85. The 1997 UNDP's *Human Development Report 1997* focused on poverty from a human development perspective and introduced a new indicator, the "human poverty index", which seeks to combine poverty as conventionally measured by income and other indicators of deprivation. Despite remarkable gains made in all regions in the past 50 years, more needs to be done, according to the report's authors, who offered a six-point plan for eradicating poverty in developing countries in one generation. UNDP is also producing a global report on poverty, which will review its experience in helping programme countries fight poverty.

United Nations International Drug control Programme

86. The activities of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in the area of alternative development, i.e. the provision of alternative sources of livelihood for those currently dependent on income from the illicit cultivation of opium poppy or coca bush, are per se poverty alleviation measures. Illicit cultivation takes place in remote rural areas, with an income level substantially below the national average, which have attracted neither national nor international assistance. The populations in question are often marginalized and belong to the poorest of the poor. In these efforts UNDCP is strongly encouraging the support of other development agencies of the United Nations system in order to provide sustainable infrastructures and raise the general development level of the areas concerned. The necessity of a gender-sensitive approach in such endeavours is recognized, and UNDCP is currently developing guidelines on systematic gender mainstreaming.

United Nations Population Fund

87. In recognition of the multidimensionality of poverty, UNFPA actively promotes the widening of choices and opportunities in the various population and reproductive health programmes it supports. In this way it contributes towards the achievement of the broad development goals of the international conferences, particularly those contained in the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.[8] UNFPA is the main advocate for the goals of the Conference and encourages Governments to invest in human capital, since such investments have high rates of return and help to raise the productivity of the poor. UNFPA supports measures that help individuals meet their reproductive health needs, through the provision of universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family-planning methods and related reproductive health services and information.

88. UNFPA recognizes that poverty has a significant influence on, and is influenced by, demographic parameters, such as population growth. There are important linkages between population pressures, natural resources, food security, the environment, ill-health and poverty. UNFPA accords highest priority in its programmes and resource allocation to the poorest countries and segments of the population, and advocates priority attention and allocation of domestic resources for poverty alleviation. UNFPA fully subscribes to the 20/20 Initiative in its programming, urging Governments to designate 20 per cent of domestic allocation to basic social services, focused on the poorest.

89. In line with the Programme of Action, UNFPA recognizes that women and children bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and that eliminating discrimination against women and securing their empowerment are preconditions for poverty eradication. UNFPA actively promotes expanded access to basic education, especially for girls and disadvantaged sub-groups. Poverty tends to be associated with low access to information, services and community participation. Reaching the poorest and most disadvantaged groups requires political resolve, imaginative policies and innovative approaches, which UNFPA supports through advocacy efforts. Hence, UNFPA programmes target poor sub-groups, for example through campaigns to disseminate culturally sensitive information about the linkages between human sexuality, family planning and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, the availability of reproductive health services, and details about how and where these can be obtained.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

90. Since its creation, the mandate of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been directed at alleviating rural poverty and thus improving livelihoods on a sustainable basis. IFAD has played a unique role in the United Nations system, as a leading institution with financial assistance focused strictly on the rural poor-smallholder farmer, the landless and, in particular, rural women in low-income countries. Drawing on past experience, IFAD addresses poverty from the perspective that the key to viable poverty eradication lies with the poor themselves and their own underutilized talents and capacities.

91. IFAD's approaches include: (a) engaging in policy dialogue with member Governments in order to achieve a favourable macroeconomic and institutional environment which stimulates the rural poor to mobilize their productive

capacities and provide them with greater bargaining position vis-à-vis the market, the State and other civil society organizations; (b) targeting of assistance and recognizing that the poor are a heterogeneous group with different economic bases and different needs for enhancing production and income; (c) improving household income generating opportunities by diversifying household income-generating activities and creating linkages between the agricultural economy, value-added activities such as small-scale agro-processing and markets outside the community; (d) strengthening the capacity of the poor to organize themselves; (e) promoting beneficiary participation; (f) encouraging private sector linkages; and (g) protecting the environment.

92. UNFPA has maintained a significant portfolio in the 1997–1998 period, which is fundamental to innovation in rural poverty alleviation in developing countries. In total, 196 projects were under implementation at the end of 1997, with a total loan amount of $398 million for 29 projects approved in this same year. In 1998, 33 projects are expected to be approved for a total of $426 million for an average loan size of $13 million. UNFPA also will provide Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) for an amount of $32 million to support project development and design activities initiated by NGOs, and research as well as training at the start-up stages of projects.

93. Furthermore, with the aim of sharing lessons learned with the international development community, IFAD made available a PC-based Internet version of Evaluation Knowledge System (EKSYST) in 1997 – a unique database that enables project evaluation to be shared among strategic planners and project designers. This initiative is part of an experimental evaluation website, IFADEVAL, which provides 62 lessons learned from the various field projects, including credit and rural financial services, farm technology generation and institutional frameworks for project implementation.

World Food Programme

94. The development work carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) is consistent with the assistance framework for poverty eradication elaborated in the World Summit for Social Development and other major United Nations conferences. The WFP addresses hunger, a key constraint to the eradication of poverty. Hunger denies its victims the use of opportunities to move out of poverty and traps them in a vicious cycle of hunger-poverty-hunger. The WFP helps people living in poverty to get out of the hunger trap and make lasting changes in their lives. For example, in 1997, WFP reached 53 million people, handling 41 per cent of global food aid. Twenty-four million of these people benefited from projects aimed at helping the chronically poor achieve self-reliant growth. At present, WFP supports 151 development projects of this kind, representing a commitment of 1.8 billion dollars.

95. Proper targeting of development assistance is regarded as the key to the eradication of poverty. WFP aims at reaching the poorest people in the neediest countries. In 1997, WFP allocated over 90 per cent of its development assistance to low income food deficit countries (LIFDCs) and over 50 per cent of such assistance to LDCs. Furthermore, WFP helps build assets, and promotes self-reliance of people in poverty. In poor rural areas, WFP uses food-for-work projects, especially during periods when hunger is most prevalent – the agricultural lean season. Food-for-work projects assures short-term food security to the poor in ways that also create community assets that support self-reliant growth. These projects build rural roads and irrigation facilities, protect land from soil erosion and floods, develop markets, build public amenities, and enhance forest resources. An improved productive base gives the poor a better chance of escaping from poverty. On the other hand, improved nutrition gives them a chance to use the opportunities provided.

96. The empowerment of women is a critical factor in poverty eradication. In this regard, WFP targets 60 per cent of programme resources to women in regions where gender inequalities are most serious. WFP's supplementary feeding programmes target pregnant and lactating mothers, and infants and children. Often, they complement other programmes for nutritional monitoring, nutritional education, immunization and the promotion of proper health and nutrition practices. WFP works in partnership with civil society to better reach people living in poverty and promote a partnership with them in decisions that affect their lives. It has established links with over a thousand international and local NGOs to help improve the effectiveness of its food aid operation. These partners build local capacities, especially in community organizations, by emphasizing participatory development and the empowerment of people living in poverty.

United Nations Environment Programme

97. Environmental sustainability and resource use in developing countries are closely linked to social development, poverty reduction and management of demographic pressures. The role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in promoting poverty

reduction needs to be seen in the context of its primary functions of assessment and analysis of global and regional environmental trends; providing early warnings and coordinating emergency environmental assistance; developing international environmental law; fostering international environmental norms, policies, principles and agreements; promoting coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the United Nations system; advancing environmental awareness and cooperation; and providing policy and advisory services in key areas. UNEP's contribution to action for poverty eradication stems from its advancement of international environmental policy and cooperation in relation to sectors such as health, human settlements, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, industry, energy, transport and tourism, and from its promotion of global and regional environmental cooperation in regard to, for example, land, water, biodiversity, climate, hazardous wastes and chemicals. Its partnership with organization and programmes of the United Nations system facilitates such links. With the recent reform and refocusing of UNEP's work, its contribution to the United Nations system-wide work addressed to eradicating poverty should become stronger.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

98. In line with the activities of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Food Summit, held in Rome in November 1996, FAO, through its normative and direct technical assistance to member countries, continues to support efforts to eradicate poverty and food insecurity. As the Secretariat of the Committee on World Food Security, FAO plays a key role in supporting the monitoring of the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action by member Governments and in stimulating action at national, regional and international levels to eradicate poverty and food insecurity. FAO plays a catalytic role in the United Nations system by developing a food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system (FIVIM) at national and international levels to identify the food insecure (their location and number, and the causes of their poverty and food insecurity). At national levels, FIVIM is expected to enable targeted action to enhance the productive and income-earning capacity of the poor, and to follow up the impact of such actions on the eradication of poverty, undernourishment and food insecurity. FAO is also undertaking policy studies on ways and means of increasing rural income through off-farm income to tackle poverty in developing countries. Other normative work for providing policy advice to developing countries includes assessing cost-effective modalities of targeted food assistance for the poor and effective emergency prevention and disaster preparedness systems, with a view to ensuring optimal linkages between relief and development in situations where emergencies occur.

99. FAO is convinced that greater attention must be given by Governments, civil society and United Nations system organizations to strengthening the capacity of people living in poverty to help themselves. In its People's Participation Programme, FAO has successfully introduced more effective strategies for strengthening the collective self-help capacities of the rural poor. In this scope, specific policy-related rural poor household level research is now being conducted in Africa and Latin America, which aims at developing more appropriate rural poverty eradication strategies. At the field level, FAO's technical assistance is being provided to member countries to establish and/or strengthen national early warning and food security information systems, with a view to providing advance information on impending food emergencies and in the development of emergency prevention and disaster preparedness national programmes. Furthermore, through its Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme, FAO aims at empowering rural women through improved technical capacities for the betterment of their socio-economic conditions.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

100. UNESCO's strategy for the eradication of poverty is centred on human resources development and capacity-building and designed to empower specific disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth, the marginalized and the unemployed. Activities are undertaken at both the conceptual and operational levels and implemented at grass-roots, community and country levels. In this context, one of UNESCO's most important lines of action was to support the design and delivery of integrated policies and programmes, especially in the field of education and training, aimed at empowering individuals and communities through a participatory approach.

101. At the conceptual and policy level, UNESCO assists Governments in identifying needs, setting up priorities and drawing up educational strategies and action plans in support of national poverty alleviation programmes. At the operational level, UNESCO supports a large number of activities and innovative projects in all regions of the world, developed on the basis of the orientations contained in the Framework for Action on the role of "Education in Poverty

Alleviation", which is currently being finalized. They often entail the use of innovative modes of educational delivery and aim at encouraging community involvement and integrated services and providing literacy and post-literacy training, as well as basic life skills in such areas as health, sanitation, environment and intensive skills training in various occupational fields tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the target groups. The major projects include, for instance, the "Guidance, counselling and youth development programme for Africa", which addresses the poor communities especially through teachers, non-formal educators and social workers in more than 22 countries with financial support from various agencies – including DANIDA, the Rockefeller Foundation, UNFPA and UNICEF; the 6-year project, commenced in 1996, on "Enhancement of learning opportunities for marginalized youth", launched in some 15 countries across the world to encourage both attitudes (empowerment, self-confidence, participation and solidarity) and vocational aptitudes to equip marginalized youth for social and economic survival, and a number of specific projects designed to meet the specific educational needs of the disadvantaged people – including out-of-school children and unemployed young people living in conditions of extreme poverty – and implemented in various countries in Africa, Asia and the Arab States.

102. The implementation of research into the causes of poverty in specific cultural and social settings and the strengthening of research infrastructures, as well as awareness-building among policy-makers and partners concerned, including at the community level, constituted another main line of UNESCO's action. Through publications and surveys – some of them prepared in collaboration with the International Social Science Council's Comparative Research Programme on Poverty – as well as country studies and projects undertaken within the framework of the Management of Social Transformations Programme, UNESCO contributes to the advancement of empirical research on poverty issues and, at the same time, provides policy-makers with reference materials, including information on the best practices on poverty eradication and combating social exclusion.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

103. The contribution of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS) to the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty focuses on programmes and projects to assist developing countries reduce urban poverty at the level of slums and squatter settlements, in line with the recommendation of Habitat Agenda. In accordance with its mandate, UNCHS provides targeted assistance to local authorities, non-governmental and community-based organizations to improve the living conditions of the urban poor, including access to land and security of tenure, housing, water supply, sanitation and other infrastructure and social services. Furthermore, and specifically within the Africa region, UNCHS has over the past years been engaged in a major effort to strengthen local research capacity on urban poverty and to promote the exchange of information thereon, with the support of the Ford Foundation. As a follow-up to the first international conference on urban poverty as well as Habitat II, the International Forum on Urban Poverty was launched in Florence, Italy, in November 1997. The central mission of this Forum is to provide international, national and local level support to partnership action aimed at the reduction of poverty in the areas of shelter and employment, transport for the urban poor, and urban violence. All of these activities represent practical contributions to the objectives of the United Nations International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

104. Within its mandate of promoting sustainable industrial development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO) continues to make significant contributions to the international community's efforts to eradicate poverty. Its ongoing programmes of assistance in the areas of micro-, small and medium enterprises, agro-based and agro-related industries, the integration of women in industrial development and rural industrial development have been designed specifically to address the needs of the poor in developing countries, particularly those in the least developed countries. At the policy level, UNIDO places emphasis on the creation of a business environment that encourages the initiatives of existing and potential micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs by promoting dialogue and partnerships between the public and private sectors. A large part of UNIDO's technical cooperation activities is devoted to building institutional capacities to effectively deliver business support services to the micro- and small-scale industry sector. Some of the recent projects aimed at poverty eradication include the provision of technical and managerial training for some 1,300 micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs in Mozambique, 20 per cent of whom were women and over 30 per cent of whom were demobilized soldiers; and strengthening a handmade paper industry in India by

applying new technologies. UNIDO also assisted 14 Latin American countries in the establishment of a regional network of 28 subcontracting and partnership exchanges linking small- and medium-scale enterprises and promoting various forms of business cooperation that have stimulated business activity and created new jobs.

International Labour Organization

105. The three major objectives of ILO are to support democracy and fundamental workers' rights, to promote employment and combat poverty, and to protect working people. Within the scope of the first United Nations Decade, and in pursuance of these objectives, the ILO, in close cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system and Bretton Woods institutions, enhances the capacity of – and provides assistance to – its constituents in the design, formulation and implementation of (a) policies; and (b) anti-poverty strategies based on job creation and the application of labour standards. Anti-poverty strategies based on job creation and the application of labour standards incorporate (i) the design and implementation of interventions to increase demand for high quality employment, (ii) the development of investment programmes, and (iii) the design and implementation of policies for the inclusion of social groups such as women and youth. Such policies also involve targeted micro-level interventions addressing the interrelated problems of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, particularly among unorganized groups of the population in the urban informal and rural sectors.

106. The creation of an enabling environment for poverty alleviation through employment-intensive growth at the macro- and sectoral levels, as well as on specific target groups, figures prominently in policy advice services provided by ILO in cooperation with UNDP in Tunisia, Egypt and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, to provide an alternative policy framework for employment-intensive growth and to design a programme of action for job creation for poverty alleviation, the Programme on Employment Generation for Poverty Reduction – better known as "Jobs for Africa" – is being implemented, with the support of UNDP, as ILO's contribution to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. ILO's work on improving the tools for poverty monitoring include the preparation of compendia of data on the incidence of poverty and on income distribution. The second edition of the compendium came out in 1996, and the third edition is expected to be published in 1999. As part of its response to fighting unemployment and under-employment and reducing poverty in developing countries, ILO's Employment Intensive Work Programme (EIP) aims at maximizing employment generation through public investments. More particularly, EIP has promoted private sector development (small- and medium-sized local contractors) and improvement of working conditions in the infrastructure and construction sectors (roads, buildings, irrigation and drainage systems, etc.), which account for two thirds of public investment in most developing countries. The programme promotes community-based investment programmes, with emphasis on improving the organizational and bargaining capacity of the grass-roots associations in both the rural and the urban informal, weakly organized areas. Such programmes seek to reduce poverty directly through high labour content technologies and indirectly through productivity enhancing infrastructure. The programme has been operational in about 30 to 40 countries, with an average expenditure of $23 million per year. Over the last 10 years, 80 per cent of EIP expenditure was in Africa, and 12 per cent in Asia.

World Health Organization

107. WHO's network on Poverty and Health aims at enabling health professionals and the health sector to play an effective role in poverty reduction. It also contributes to the public debate on poverty and health, and provides collective support to political commitments to reduce poverty and improve the health status of populations. WHO ensures that all its programmes identify highly vulnerable economic groups and provide the means to improve and evaluate their health status. In its specific approach to poverty eradication, WHO's activities are oriented towards countries in greatest need. In this regard, WHO focuses its work at both the country and global levels.

108. WHO's activities at the country level include (a) reviewing national policies through in-depth analysis, and assisting in their implementation; (b) ensuring that health sector reform strategies provide for secure access of the poorest to health care and basic social services; (c) supporting Governments in advocating for the integration of health concerns into overall national development policies; and (d) creating partnerships with civil society groups, including the private sector.

109. At the international level, WHO (a) promotes wider international attention towards countries in greatest need and towards the vicious cycle of poverty and ill health, and advocates for increased technical and financial support; and (b) develops network of strategic allies by collaborating with institutions, groupings of low-income countries, such as the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, NGOs, professional associations and business enterprises, that can improve the health of the most deprived.

International Maritime Organization

110. The contribution of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to the eradication of poverty is through its work regarding the safety of navigation and the prevention of pollution from ships, the twin fundamentals governing international maritime transport, which is in large part a direct input to economic development through poverty alleviation by facilitating the liberalization and globalization of international trade and commerce. The IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) objectives are to assist developing countries in strengthening their institutional, legal, managerial, technical and training capabilities to implement global rules and standards uniformly. The established priorities are articulated on a regional basis and targeted towards capacity-building which leads to self-reliance in the maritime industry while also generating and sustaining mass employment in the fishing, recreation, tourism and export-led industries, etc., particularly of primary agricultural products. In addition to the innumerable shore-based personnel engaged in the shipping industry, there are some 1.2 million seafarers, most of whom are drawn from developing countries.

International Civil Aviation Organization

111. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sees the development of civil aviation as an increasingly important factor in the future alleviation of poverty in developing countries. In fact, civil aviation is having a most significant impact on the economies of most developing States and is affecting, both directly and indirectly, the standard of living of the citizens of those States. The positive effects of air transport on the immediate living conditions of the very poor can readily be seen in the emergency distribution of essential foods, medicine and other commodities, and in the transport of health and social workers to remote locations where traditional means of transport are often impractical or impossible. These relief services, however essential in the short term, do not have a significant long-term effect on poverty alleviation. Rather, it is the utilization of air transport that serves as a mechanism for trade and communication, a significant employer and a conduit for technology transfer, as well as a powerful engine for economic development.

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

112. The activity of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) regarding the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is in the context of research on gender-specific poverty. In this context, INSTRAW has elaborated a project proposal to examine "Women's Poverty in Rural Africa" in its 1998-1999 biennium. This project, which entails research and an expert group meeting, aims to test the "feminization of poverty" thesis, which appears to be hypothetical in most cases. Through the implementation of the project, INSTRAW would undertake research, using rapid rural appraisal methods, to identify the structural determinants of female poverty in rural Africa, develop quantitative poverty indicators, typologize poverty in terms of degrees of vulnerability, and establish policy guidelines for gender-aware poverty alleviation and eradication strategies. To better understand the structural causes of poverty, the research will be carried out in rural communities of three countries chosen from stratified categories of low-, medium- and high-income African countries. INSTRAW will initiate actions to secure the collaboration of ECA and UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in elaborating the research design, identifying the study sites, as well as in designing a joint anti-poverty campaign.

United Nations University

113. The United Nations University (UNU) has been undertaking activities of research, capacity-building and networking in the developing countries that are not designed to address poverty eradication directly, but contribute to eradicating poverty and hunger, which is a fundamental form of poverty. Some of UNU's selected activities include its contribution to Africa's development, food and nutrition and environmental issues. UNU, for example, is carrying out a research and capacity-building programme oriented toward development in Africa from the perspective of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations system-wide Initiative on Africa. The programme is contributing to the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in October 1998, which is intended to produce an action-oriented agenda for African development towards the twenty-first century.

114. The current UNU Programme on Food and Nutrition has also made a widely recognized contribution to the solution of the major nutrition problems of developing countries and to increasing the competence of developing country institutions to deal with national food and nutrition problems. The programme continues to focus on the functional consequences of iron deficiency; the damaging influences of chronic dietary energy deficiency; the

introduction of anthropological methodologies for the evaluation and compilation of nutrition and health-related interventions: the generation and compilation of food composition data in all regions and countries of the world, bringing advanced information technologies to the developing countries; and the collection of all dietary intake studies in each country over the past 30 years as a basis for epidemiological studies of diet and disease and other uses. These activities and findings of research in progress are reported in the UNU Food and Nutrition Bulletin, a widely read nutrition journal in developing countries. Many activities of the programme are jointly organized with or supported by other United Nations organizations, including WHO, FAO, UNICEF, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Bank and UNESCO. The programme puts UNU in a leading and mediating role of the ACC Subcommittee on Nutrition, and is seeking further collaboration and better coordination in the United Nations system. Furthermore, the People, Land Management and Environmental Change (PLEC) programme of UNU is a demonstration and capacity-building project concerned with the conservation of biological diversity in agricultural lands located in priority ecosystems and managed by farmers and pastoralists. The objective of the project is to develop sustainable and participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation within agricultural systems, which also contributes to achieving world food security.

World Bank

115. The Bank's fundamental objective is to help its partner countries reduce poverty and improve living standards. The Bank's progress in implementing its poverty strategy is documented in the report on poverty reduction and the World Bank. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Network was formed in July 1997 to ensure that the Bank makes the greatest contribution that it can to poverty reduction. The Network has a Poverty Reduction Board that has identified two shifts in implementation strategy that focus on formulating poverty-focused strategies and assessing the impact of Bank projects on the poor. Poverty assessments, the main vehicle for analytical work on poverty, have been completed for the majority of member countries and periodic updates are planned. The Bank's country assistance strategies have come to rely more closely on the analysis and recommendations of the poverty assessments. In addition, new guidelines are being developed to ensure that country assistance strategies are more poverty-focused, participatory and results-oriented. Poverty-targeted lending continues to be monitored, and operational guidelines are being updated to better reflect current practices. The Bank is working with Governments and other agencies to establish effective and sustainable poverty monitoring systems as well as analytical capabilities in client countries. The greater use of participatory approaches in Bank work has also helped to ensure that the poor are heard in the formulation of strategies and projects. Furthermore, empowerment, participation and social capital are recognized as important means for action against poverty. The *World Development Report, 2000* will be on poverty and will involve a highly collaborative process. It will also be a major organizing force for new work in the study of poverty and the goals of social inclusion and more equitable economic growth.

116. In collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, the Bank is working on a poverty monitoring methods programme. Among the programme's activities is an ongoing exchange of view on approaches for monitoring the social outcomes of development, with the goal of developing a core monitoring instrument. At the last meeting held in April 1998 in New York, the UNICEF/World Bank/UNDP Working Group on Monitoring Poverty Alleviation Activities exchanged information on working plans for poverty research and analytical studies, discussed follow-up plans for poverty monitoring activities, and agreed on next steps. Moreover, the World Bank, the donor community, and partner countries are working on ways to strengthen their partnerships in order to meet the basic development goals to be achieved by the year 2015. Among the objectives is halving the incidence of extreme poverty. As part of the effort to track progress in achieving goals, the Bank is taking a leading role in defining Strategy 21 indicators. The Bank has organized informal groups to define poverty and environment indicators and, with UNDP and OECD, organized meetings to decide on a set of core indicators, which have been incorporated in the 1998 edition of *World Development Indicators*. The Bank has also been involved in follow-up meetings with OECD/DAC on how achievable the goals are and on the informal network on poverty reduction.

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9* (E/1998/29).

[3] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[4] General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex.

[5] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 6* (E/1997/26).

[6] Ibid., *1998, Supplement No. 6* (E/1998/26).

[7] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

[8] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.